

## outta my mind

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/30359001) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/30359001>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Video Blogging RPF</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Clay   Dream/GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Clay   Dream (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF)</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Alternate Universe - Office</a> , <a href="#">Enemies to Lovers</a> , <a href="#">kind of, is it really enemies to lovers if you're in love with them the whole time</a> , <a href="#">Love</a> , <a href="#">Idiots in Love</a> , <a href="#">sapnap fixes everything always</a> , <a href="#">Fluff and Angst</a> , <a href="#">Angst with a Happy Ending</a> , <a href="#">implied karlnap</a> , <a href="#">Clay   Dream Being an Idiot (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">no beta we just die</a> , <a href="#">POV Clay   Dream (Video Blogging RPF)</a> , <a href="#">Tension</a> , <a href="#">Enemies to Friends to Lovers</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2021-03-31 Completed: 2021-04-12 Chapters: 5/5 Words: 18304

## outta my mind

by [cardans](#)

### Summary

And then, calm and level, George says, "I wish we could be friends."

He looks at George, and he *wants*. An incessant need burns beneath his skin, builds up hotter and hotter every second. It's grown from that very first day they met, from a tiny spark to an inferno, white-hot. No matter how many times Dream tries to suffocate it, it just comes back, stronger and hotter and slowly burning him alive. It'll kill him if he lets it, and he can't let it.

"We're not friends," he says. The words taste like acid in his mouth. "We can never be friends."

dream cannot stand his coworker, or so he claims.

inspired by the hating game by sally thorne.

## thursday

### Chapter Summary

dream really hates george.

### Chapter Notes

one day i'll write something that isn't enemies to lovers and set in one of my favorite books. today is not that day.

this fic is inspired by a book called *the hating game* by sally thorne, but there won't be any spoilers for the book and you don't need to read it for this fic to make sense. i just really wanted to write an office au, and the hating game dynamic fit it well.

title comes from "outta my mind" by monsune. i highly recommend you all give it a listen!

anyway, i really hope you enjoy this fic!! kudos and comments are greatly appreciated  
<33

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Would it kill you to help me?”

“I mean, I could, but I don’t particularly want to.”

Dream watches George through the reflection of his monitor, watches as the other man takes a deep breath and then screams into his balled-up jacket. Dream rolls his eyes, sets down his pen. George is always dramatic, but he’s especially dramatic after lunch.

“Oh my god, fine. What is it?” Dream swivels around his chair and rolls over to George’s desk, which isn’t particularly far. Their shared office space is tiny, barely large enough for one assistant, let alone two. But Techno seems to think it’s more than enough room for the two of them, seeing how last week he mentioned wanting to get a third assistant, as if there wasn’t already too little work just for the two of them. Their boss is a man with too much money and not enough motivation. He doesn’t actually need one assistant, let alone two, but he’s just so *lazy*. He’d rather reread *The Iliad* for the fourth time than get any actual work done. But Dream shouldn’t complain. He’s lucky to have this job. The pay is good, and he can take the day off whenever he wants. In fact, the only real downside is—

“Dream.”

George. The only real downside is George. Perhaps Dream should start from the beginning.

He works for SB Inc., a family-owned video game company. They first came out with the Nintendo Switch exclusive game *Exile*, where the player is a sixteen-year-old boy that’s been

banished from his country and is now desperately trying to come back to save them all from the wrath of some big bad god. They released two other games that also blew up, *Bloodvines* and *Journey to the End*, and with each game, they've become that much more popular. They're taking the gaming world over, one video game at a time. Dream works directly under the CEO, Techno, who everyone affectionately refers to as The Blade due to his tendency to fire entire teams when he's really angry, or really happy, or simply really bored. Dream's been working beneath him since *Exile* was just an idea on a page. And he's loved it. Really, he has. Working on video games, programming them to perfection, that's his *thing*. It's always been his dream, ever since he was a little kid and first beat *Pokemon Pinball* on his older sister's Gameboy. And he still loves it. It's just... George.

George came later. He was brought on a few months before *Journey to the End*'s release, after Techno decided that Dream was becoming a hermit, just sitting in that dark office, alone all day with no one to talk to. Techno claimed he was doing Dream a favor by bringing George on, and it's not like Dream can just tell his boss to fuck off to his face, or at least not during work hours. George has been here the last six months, working alongside Dream as Techno's assistant. And it's not like he's not good at his job. It's just that he's *George* and he's annoying as hell. Everything about him just irks Dream. His stupid hair, and his stupid laugh, and his stupidly pretty smile that he just shows off like it's nothi—

“Dream.” Fingers snap in front of his face.

“Oh my god, you just don't stop, do you?” Dream pulls George's mousepad towards him. It's blue, just like damn near everything else George owns, just like the shirt he's wearing now. It may even be the same color... Dream shakes his head slightly, trying to resist the urge to hold the mousepad up to George's shirt. “What? What do you want?”

“I need you to edit this release page.” *Need*. God, George really needs to work on his people skills.

Dream turns his attention to the screen, rolls his finger down the little scroll wheel. He scans over the page of text, detailing everything that could be found in edition 2.2 of *Journey to the End*. Beside him, George gnaws on his cuticles. Dream stays quiet for a minute, and then another, just to really make sure George is sufficiently anxious, before he shrugs. “Looks fine to me. Did you include Ranboo's species?”

George scoffs. “Did you even read it? It's the first line.” He goes for his mouse, only to grab Dream's hand. Every single muscle in Dream's body goes tight and tense, a full body inhale. George slots his finger between Dream's ring and middle, clicking as he highlights the first line of text.

Right there, plain as day, reads: *Added half-bloods*.

A second passes.

And another.

Dream pulls his hand out from beneath George's and slumps back in his chair, crossing his hands over his stomach as if that'll stop his heart from dropping right into it. It doesn't. His beating heart drops, and his stomach swallows it whole. “That's too vague.”

George leans back in his own chair, crosses his hands over his own stomach.

The Mirror Game.

The rules are simple. Mirror the other person. First to break away loses. It's a stupid game, but it's not like they've got much else to do. God forbid they do actual *work*. "What do you mean 'too vague?'" George asks, defensive.

Dream rolls his eyes, sticks out a foot. George does the same, albeit a bit more exaggerated, and his foot collides with Dream's when he moves it. "I mean it's too vague. What else could I fucking mean? Ranboo's species is one of the biggest mysteries in the game; it's got to be addressed a bit more than *Added half-bloods*."

George's mouth drops open. Dream can see the blood rushing to his face, coloring his cheeks firetruck red. It's one of Dream's favorites looks on him – when he's so angry that he turns an entirely different color. It's partly because of the ridiculous shade that George goes, and partly because Dream's the only one that ever makes him look like that. *Anyone* could make George smile, but only Dream makes him so mad he goes red.

"*It's one of the biggest mysteries in the game*," George repeats, like Dream is stupid or something.

"That's literally what I just—"

"We can't just spoil it in the release notes!" George throws his hands up in the air, effectively losing the Mirror Game. That has to be the fastest loss in Mirror Game history. Dream'll rub it in his face later. Right now, he's got an argument to win.

"Well, it needs to be address—"

"*It is*," George states. He's got his bottom lip jut out in a pout, and Dream can't look away. He's absolutely staring now, so hard it's obvious.

"You've got your serial killer eyes on."

The words snap him back to reality.

Serial killer eyes. *Adjective*. A term describing the way Dream sometimes looks when he stares at George. First coined by Geroge on his third day in the office, after he compared Dream to the masked villain in *Exile* by saying that they shared the same 'serial killer eyes.' Also known as the way Dream looks when he wants nothing more than to act on his urges.

The truth is, he doesn't hate George. Sure, he acts like it, but it's easier to mask the feeling with hate than it is to mask it with friendship. Friendship can develop into something more. At least with hate, Dream is ensured that this little crush of his will never be found out, not ever. George will be too busy hating him to ever catch on.

"I do not." Yes, he does, and he still hasn't looked away. He only looks up when George's hand brushes his mouth in interest. George looks at his fingers after, like he's searching for remnants of something. He must think he has something on his lips. *Good*, Dream thinks. *Let him think that*. Anything is better than the truth. "And it's not addressed nearly enough."

"Then what do you suppose I write?"

Dream shrugs again. "Dunno. I did my part, now you've gotta do yours."

George groans, loud and echoing. He collapses further into his chair, falling downdowndown until his knees are nearly touching the ground. "I asked you for help." It comes out muffled, mouth hidden against the bunched-up fabric of his hoodie. Dream would take a picture if he could, if he wasn't positive George would scalp him for it.

“You hardly asked.”

“But I still *asked*. ”

Dream lets his head fall back against his chair. He stares up at the white ceiling, begins to count the tiles. He spins aimlessly in his chair as George collapses fully into a heap on the floor. He only knows this because he’s seen it happen dozens of times before, knows every grumble and groan that leaves his lips as he settles onto the ground. “You should get up. Techno could come in at any moment, y’know.” It’s an empty threat. They both know Techno is holed up in his office, even more of a hermit than he claimed Dream to be all those months ago.

Despite its emptiness, George still plays along. “Let him. I’ll just file another complaint against you.”

The HR Game. They haven’t played this one in a while.

Dream plants his foot down, lets his chair slow to a stop as he laughs, real and genuine. “For what?” Don’t get him wrong, there’s *plenty* George could report him for, plenty he *has* reported Dream for, but Dream doesn’t remember doing anything untoward to George. He’s been nothing but decent since Monday, at least. And it’s Thursday now, which is really saying something.

“Profanity.”

Dream looks down at the ground. Three George’s swirl across his vision. He has to pinch himself to ensure he’s not dreaming again. It hurts like any other pinch, and so Dream closes his eyes until the pounding in his head ceases. “I’ll just report you right back.”

He opens his eyes just as George picks up his head. “For *what*? I’ve done nothing wrong!”

Dream hums, the face of indifference. “Don’t know. I’ll make something up.”

George’s jaw drops. Dream raises his foot to nudge it shut, then decides against it. That’ll be grounds for a *real* HR complaint, one that Dream probably won’t be able to talk his way out of.

“You can’t do that.”

“When has that ever stopped me before?”

George seems to be at a loss for words. It seems Dream’s won the HR game, too. That’s two in the span of thirty minutes. Another record.

George stands up quickly and sinks back into his chair just as fast, turning away from Dream and back to his monitor. “I’m submitting the release as is,” George decides.

Dream’s jaw softens, unsurprised. “You always do,” he says. He puts his foot on the back of George’s chair and kicks, sending himself rolling back towards his own desk.

George is quiet for a whole minute – Dream counts it out in his head. “Is it really that vague?” It’s practically a whisper, so quiet that Dream isn’t sure if it’s intended for him or for George to answer. His clarification comes a moment later. “Dream?” Spoken louder this time, but just as unsure.

“It’s fine. It’ll be a good surprise for the fans.” If it were Dream, he would’ve worded it differently, but there’s a reason why it’s George that does the release updates and not him. George knows how to connect with the fans in a way that Dream just doesn’t. Maybe it’s because George used to be a

fan himself not too long ago, or maybe it's just George himself. The point is, it's not Dream's place to tell him what he should and shouldn't put.

"You think so?"

Dream taps his foot, fixing his attention on his monitor. He can see George's reflection again, can see the way his finger is hovering over his mouse. Dream shakes his head as he pushes back his chair and stands. Apparently, he's got to do everything himself. He walks the entire six feet between their desks and presses down on the button himself, submitting the report for edition 2.2 of *Journey to the End*. "There. Now quit yapping."

George has got his mouth wide open again with eyes to match, big and shocked. Dream presses three fingers to his chin and shuts it himself before going back to his chair.

The action must've really offended George, because he doesn't talk again for the rest of the day.

#### Chapter End Notes

my twitter is [@offlinednf!](https://twitter.com/offlinednf)

## friday

### Chapter Summary

techno calls a meeting, and george has car troubles.

It's hard to say why George hates him.

It's a topic Dream sometimes thinks about on the drive to work, during the ad breaks of whatever podcast he's currently invested in.

He knows why he hates George, of course. Or claims to hate. Whatever. For one, he's annoying, and two, he's far too giving to everyone *but* Dream. He gives out his pretty-boy smiles to everyone he meets, easy as breathing, yet when it comes to Dream, there's nothing but apathy and occasional annoyance. Dream can only remember one time he ever got that smile directed towards him, and it was on George's first day.

George had entered the room, all three-piece-suit and bleeding light and warmth. He lit up the dark and dingy room just by entering it, like some kind of beacon. He'd looked at Dream, smiled that big, pretty smile, and sent his heart beating so fast that he was convinced it was going to give out on him, right then and there. He'd had to look out the window to ground himself, had to stare at the little passing figures on the streets below to convince his traitorous heart not to go into cardiac arrest in the middle of the office. When he finally deemed himself calm enough to look back at George, George had already arranged his things and left the room, likely to greet other employees. Dream never saw that smile again, at least not directed towards him.

So yeah, he knows why he hates George, but he's never understood why George hates him back.

Maybe it's because hate just breeds hate, and George's feelings towards him are simply a reflection of his own, just as Dream intended them to be, but Dream feels like it's more than that.

Sometimes George looks at him in this *way*. Dream can't identify it, and he can't even begin to describe it, but it unsettles him. It feels like George is looking through him, like he's seeing through every single mask Dream has ever put up. It never lasts long – thirty seconds, tops – and it doesn't happen often, but when it does, it shakes Dream up for the rest of the day.

Sometimes, he sees that look in his sleep.

Like, he'll be having a Coke with Andy Samberg in some dive bar in the middle of nowhere, normal dream things, and he'll look down at the ice in his empty glass and when he looks back up to respond to one of Andy's jokes, he'll find George there instead. Suddenly George will be sitting there with that look on his face. Suddenly they're in a fancy restaurant, dressed to the nines, with a candlelit on the table between them, and the waitress is bringing them a piece of cheesecake with a *Happy Anniversary* cake topper on it.

Dream wakes up, without fail, every single time. And he can never fall asleep after.

In fact, he had that dream just last night. It's the second time this month. He woke up before the sun both times, hot and panicked. So panicked, he managed to body slam Patches. Her hiss woke

up right up, and she'd given him a puffy scratch all the way around his wrist. It's, thankfully, stopped bleeding, but Dream still has the sleeves of his shirt rolled up to his elbows just in case.

Oh yeah, his shirt.

Every Friday, they dress business casual. They dress casual every other day of the week, and even if they didn't, it's still a rule Techno has, falling into the same category of rules that bans the topic of orphans and the story of Theseus. They're stupid rules, but they're followed nonetheless.

For Dream, business casual means whatever button-down looks the least wrinkled and his darkest pair of jeans. For George, it's something different every time. Some weeks he's dressed as Dream is and others, he's in something new, something Dream's never seen before. No matter how out of the box it is, it always looks good. Infuriatingly so. Just once, Dream wants to see George fumble with his clothes, as he does during every other part of his life. But apparently George's one specialty is his attire. He's never not looked good. Even when it's not Friday and he's wearing some random hoodie and paint-stained jeans, he never fails to look anything less than perfect. At this point, Dream's beginning to think it's more of a him issue than it is a George issue. Not that he'll ever admit that.

As Dream parks his car, he finds himself wondering what George'll be wearing today. Will it be a polo and slacks, or something more dressed up? He tosses potential outfit ideas around in his head as he goes up to the fifth floor. He doesn't greet anyone on his way to his office, not that he ever does normally.

As usual, he's beat George there.

Dream first goes over to George's desk, clicking his computer on. Then he settles into his own chair, swirls it around once or twice, before finally starting up his computer for the day. It always takes a while to boot up and Dream normally spends that time scrolling aimlessly on his phone, unless George is there. When George is there, he spends the time annoying him. Obviously.

He's only just clicked on Twitter when George steps into their office. Dream's still staring at his phone as he turns his chair towards the doorway, reading over an article from *New York Times*. He finishes the last paragraph before he finally looks up at George. His phone slips out of his hand and onto the floor. Dream doesn't even hear the thud.

George stands in front of him, phone in hand, backpack slung over his shoulder. He has on a deep maroon sweater. The collar of a white shirt sticks out of it, unbuttoned. His pants are houndstooth gray, perfectly fitted. His hair is a mess on top of his head, dark and tousled. Dream looks from it to the collar of his shirt and then back to it. The spit dries in his open mouth. He hears a fly buzz in the air, and promptly shuts it. Saliva rushes, so fast Dream almost chokes.

George has done it again. He's surprised Dream, with his silly little outfits and his stupid style. Dream didn't think he could top the suit he wore last month but here he is, completing blowing all of Dream's expectations out of the water.

“Dream,” George greets with a tip of his head, not even looking up from his phone. He's reading something on there, too. He, apparently, finishes reading, sliding his phone into the pocket of those perfectly fitted pants. He looks at Dream, his expression unreadable. He's got that look on his face again, the one Dream sees whenever he closes his eyes.

It takes everything in Dream not to shift in his seat, not to cave in on himself and hide whatever it is George is looking at, looking *for*. It's only silent for about three seconds, but those three seconds feel excruciatingly long. Dream's heart has sped up during that time, like the way a bomb ticks

faster when it's about to blow. The world feels as though it's tilted off its axis and is now hurtling straight for the sun.

George tilts his head, furrows his brows. "You wore that shirt last week," he says, and takes a seat at his desk.

The pounding in Dream's chest reduces as he exhales. The world rights itself once more. He looks down at his body, taking in the clothes. It's a patterned blue button-down, paired with the usual black pants. "What are you talking about? No, I didn't."

George rolls his eyes, turning in his chair. His eyes find Dream's. The Staring Game has begun, and it won't stop until one of them looks away. "You wear it, like, three times a month."

Dream opens his mouth, shuts it promptly, then opens it again. "Not true." It's definitely true, but it's nine in the morning. Dream can't lose to George at *nine* in the morning.

George laughs. Laughter isn't a rare sound around SB Inc., but it is in this office space. The effort it takes to memorize the sound makes Dream's head feel heady, and it doesn't even work, so it's not worth it in the slightest. Still, Dream tries every time. He hears so little of George's laugh – he wants to treasure it as much as he can.

"Relax," George says. The corners of his lips are perked up. It's not quite a smile, but it's still enough to make Dream's palms sweat. "I didn't say it looked bad. It looks—" The skin between his brows creases a little, like he can't quite find the word. "–you look fine."

*Fine* is hardly a compliment, but Dream gets so few positive words from George that he takes it as one. Fearing the consequences of his ever-quicken heart, Dream does what he does best. He fakes confidence until it becomes something real and solid. It's how he got through high school, and it's how he plans on getting through adulthood.

"Georgie." His voice is low and teasing. "Was that a *compliment*? You're gonna make me blush." When all else fails, use fire, right? Dream's words are all the fire he has – he needs to make them count.

George's eyes go comically wide. All the blood rushes away from his face and then quickly back into it, only it's twice as much as before. He's bright pink all over, from the tips of his ears to where his neck is hidden by his shirt. Dream bets that if he pulled it down just a little, George would be bright pink there, too. "That wasn't—"

"A compliment? George, you really shouldn't have." Dream lays a hand across his own chest, feels his beating heart. "You of all people should know my ego is big enough."

"It's— You're—"

Dream arches his brows, a smug grin on his face. "Infuriating? Annoying? Aggravating?" He leans closer and closer with each word, crossing the invisible line that separates George's side of the office from his. He's so close that he can feel George's shuddering breath, and can see every individual eyelash. It's too close, he knows it, and yet he can't stop. George is rapidly approaching that firetruck red that Dream loves so much, and Dream doesn't want to stop until he sees it.

"Harassing. HR," George threatens, voice flat. George's gaze suddenly shifts down, just a little bit, but enough to be noticeable. Dream doesn't know what he's looking at, but that doesn't really matter. All that matters is that he lost the game.

Dream leans back into his chair, pleased with himself. "That's another win under the belt, Gogy."

That's, what, three for three in the past two days? That's a new record, I'm sure of it. *And I got a compliment from you? Man, am I on a roll or what?"*

"It wasn't a compliment."

"Liar." Dream takes another spin in his chair and when he stops again, he can see that the blush has diffused from George's face. Not by much, but enough to see that George has calmed down a little. "So what's on the agenda today?" he asks. This is how it usually goes – Dream dicks around as soon as he's settled in while George actually checks his email and sees what they need to do.

"Review levels thirteen through eighteen of *Project Untitled*," George reads out, his voice a level monotone, a poor imitation of their boss. "Send the Graphics team a reminder of their deadlines. Create a backup design in case they fall through again. Attend the *Journey to the End* three month post-release meeting. Collect and file the quarterly reports from each department. And," George takes a breath, switches back to his normal voice. Dream uses two of his pencils to start a drumroll. "Have a Staring Game rematch."

Dream almost topples his chair over from how fast he whips it around. He opens his mouth on an exhale, ready to declare the start of the Staring Game.

"*After* we finish our work."

There is it. Dream's face falls in false annoyance. He slumps in his chair, turns it back around towards his monitor. "Who's infuriating now?"

"Oh, shut up."

---

As he and George exit the elevator and step onto the fourth floor, Dream thinks about how they're willingly about to enter the tenth circle of Hell.

Listen, no one *likes* meetings, but Dream absolutely dreads them. It's the only time they see the downstairs employees, but even that brief time with them makes him want to tear his hair out. It's not that they're bad. They're just so *boring*. At least George has some personality to him. The downstairs employees act like jumpy little robots, all terrified of doing something to displease their dear Blade.

Except for Sapnap. He's actually decent.

Sapnap is the head of media relations. Dream's known him since middle school, where they bonded over their mutual love of being the best at whatever game was currently popular. He's worked for SB Inc. almost as long as Dream has, and has been head of media relations practically forever. Sapnap claims it's because the fans *love* him and that's why he's kept the job for so long. Dream just thinks it's because he's the only one who actually knows how to work an app other than Instagram.

Speaking of Sapnap...

"Aye!" There's a whistle, and a snap, and when Dream looks up, he sees Sapnap

pointing at the seat beside him. His eyes seem to be growing increasingly desperate. Dream glances over his shoulder, sees Amy from customer service shoulder-checking her co-workers with her eyes locked on Sapnap.

Dream slows down to a lazy tread, and he can practically hear the air being pulled sharply between

Sapnap's teeth. Then there's a huff in his ear, a hand on his forearm, and an unexpected yank. Dream nearly trips over his own two feet as George pulls him towards their seats.

"Remember what happened last time you pissed off Sapnap? We were cleaning thumb-tacks out of our chairs for *weeks*," George hisses in his ear, so close that Dream can feel nothing but hot air against his skin. He should do something, should spit out some clever rebuttal, but instead he takes his seat in the chair beside Sapnap and tries desperately to forget the way it feels when burning breath hits touch-starved skin. He tries for all of two seconds before he gives up, choosing instead to file the feeling away for another time.

"Thank fucking *god*," Sapnap says, voice dripping in relief. He has on a fancy sweater and khakis, and he never stops messing with the collar of it, even as he slumps all the way down in his chair. He's practically falling off, the nape of his neck pressed to the top of the seat. "She won't leave me alone. Keeps emailing me lyrics to *Love Story* by Taylor Swift."

George sits down on the other side of Dream. "What'd you do to her?"

"I ghosted her."

George laughs, light and airy. "Why'd you ghost her?"

"Because she wouldn't fucking leave me alone!"

The boys on either side of Dream erupt in laughter, too loud for the quiet room. Dan from quality control glares at them, and Dream fixes him with a cool stare until he looks away. By then, the laughter has dissolved into half-caught breaths and gentle wheezes.

Sapnap sits up fully in his chair, leans towards them with his elbows on his knees. He looks them both over, another whistle leaving his lips. "Looking good, George. Looking... like yourself, Dream."

Dream scoffs. "Well, George certainly seems to enjoy how I look. He gave me a *compliment* today." Dream smiles, big and smug, as George sputters next to him.

"It wasn't a compliment. I said you look *fine*, not that you look good," George retorts. The tops of his cheeks are a light pink, like a fine dusting of snow.

"Fine, good, it's all the same to me. What would looking good be anyway, Georgie? Do I not look *good* to you?"

George shifts in his chair. The tips of his ears are a vivid red, far brighter than the blush still gracing his face. "You look fine," he repeats carefully, like he cannot – will not – say anything else. Dream pouts. He can't make George squirm if George gives him nothing to work with. "This is just–"

Sapnap coughs obnoxiously, as if he's interrupting something. "What George's trying to say is that you're boring as hell, but since this is your maximum effort, he's giving you a pass," Sapnap says, looking both bored and amused, all at once. Dream twists his face. George tilts his head in what appears to be thought, and says nothing.

"This isn't my 'maximum effort.'" Dream does the air quotes and all. "You haven't seen anything *close* to maximum effort."

"I've seen your prom photos, Dream. That's about as maximum as you get." Out of the corner of his eye, he sees George's head shoot up.

Dream rolls his eyes, thinking back to the bright red suit that matched his date's dress. Not his finest work. "I was *forced* into wearing that. It doesn't count."

Sapnap opens his mouth, but it's George who speaks next. "Then show us something that does count."

Dream turns towards George, the corner of his mouth pulling up into the barest hint of a smile. Deep in his chest, his heart is thrown into overdrive. "So you *want* to see me dressed up?"

George scowls. Dream can see his throat bob as he swallows, just before speaking. "I didn't say that. I just mean that you're doing all this talk. You may as well deliver on it."

Sapnap grins, wide and victorious. There's something else in that smile, something that unsettles Dream completely. He doesn't get a chance to examine it further due to Sapnap wrapping an arm around his shoulders, pulling him in. If he were anyone else, it'd be uncomfortable. "Yeah, Dream. *Deliver* on it. Get all dolled up for us. Show us what you look like when you *try*."

Dream shouldn't do this. He has no reason to prove himself to these two idiots.

(Well, one idiot. George's actually pretty smart, when he tries. Sapnap, on the other hand, is a perpetual bad idea. The devil on Dream's shoulder, forever and always.)

Dream doesn't even own a proper suit. But he can't back down from a challenge, at least not without trying to win it first. "We'll see," Dream finally says, knowing damn well he'll be 'dolled up' next Friday.

Sapnap whoops, loud and right in his damn ear, only to be met with a scolding.

"You gonna make me write you up for noise again, Sapnap?" Techno asks as he walks into the room, monotone and apathetic. It's the first time Dream has seen his boss today. He's dressed in a willowy white shirt that looks like it was pulled straight out of *Pirates of the Caribbean* and he has complicated gold necklaces to match, thick and thin chains clasped around his neck and over his chest, intersecting in a way that invites stares. And what makes it worse is that this is *toned down* for him and his beloved business-casual Friday. His long pink hair is pulled back into a loose bun, held in place by four gold bobby pins (Dream only knows this because he's had to run out and buy those same gold bobby pins on multiple occasions over the years). He strides into the room with a stack of papers in hand and dumps them into the lap of the first person he sees, a scared-looking intern. Dream has no doubt she'll be gone by the end of the week.

"Of course not, sir," Sapnap replies, but he's still got that same sleazy grin on his face. He and Dream have known Techno for years. Their relationship with their boss isn't nearly as close as the one between them, but it's close enough.

Techno grumbles. "Why have I not fired you yet?"

"Because you love me too much, sir."

Techno snorts, pig-like. "Yeah, right." He crosses over to the front of the room, beginning to scribble numbers onto the whiteboard. "Alright – *Journey to the End* came out three months ago. Obviously. That's why we're here. Anyway. Since then, we've sold..." Techno drones on and on about the number side of things. Dream jots down notes. Beside him, George does the same, and occasionally reaches over to scribble on Dream's paper. In return, Dream draws dicks on George's notebook. Because he's a professional.

This continues for a majority of the meeting, evolving into the two of them just straight up drawing

lines through each other's words. And when they run out of room on the paper, they start stepping on one another's shoes. By the end of the meeting, Dream's toes have gone numb, and George nurses a limp as he walks out of the conference room. Dream hangs back for a second, trying to convince his toes to move again.

Sapnap's voice breaks his focus. "You act so differently around George."

The words suck the air right from his lungs. Dream looks up, and then around. The room is empty.

Dream answers slowly, willing his words into something calm and natural. Despite his effort, they still come out tight and tense. "What are you talking about?"

Dream doesn't like the smile that appears on Sapnap's face. It's big, and proud, and full of secrets. "That! I'm talking about *that!* You get so weird talking *about* him. You should see yourself talking *to* him!"

"I'm not *weird!* I don't talk to him any differently than I talk to you." He forces himself to stand. Feeling rushes down to the tips of his toes, a broken dam. Dream bites the meat of his cheek to keep from groaning.

Sapnap gives him this *look*, chock full of disbelief and suggestion. "You don't, but let's say you did. You claim he's your enemy, but you treat him how you treat me, and I am most certainly not your enemy."

Dream opens his mouth in rebuttal. Sapnap jabs a finger against his lips to stop him, and keeps it there as he speaks. Dream holds his breath.

"Playing on different sides in COD does *not* count!" God, Sapnap knows him too well. "You don't hate him. I don't think you've ever hated him."

Dream finally pushes Sapnap's hand away from his mouth. His skin feels overwhelmingly warm, as if he's running a sudden fever. A bead of sweat races down the nape of his neck, straight over his spine. He feels raw and overexposed, like Sapnap is seeing into the barest parts of him. He doesn't know what to say, how to respond. Sapnap is his closest friend. He knows everything there is to know about Dream. He should know about this, too, but Dream just can't get the words out. If he voices his feelings, that makes them real. And the last thing he needs is for them to be real and permanent. "You're reaching," Dream decides.

Sapnap stares at him for one minute. Two. And then, a sigh. He shakes his head a little bit, like he's giving up. "Whatever, man," he says. "League tonight?"

It's only then that Dream exhales. His worries seem to exit with the air. Sapnap knows – Dream knows he knows – but he can know whatever he wants so long as he keeps it to himself. "Yeah, League tonight. Call me whenever you're down to play."

"I'll call your mom."

"Dad?"

"Okay, now you're just being weird."

---

By the time five o'clock rolls around, it's pitch black outside.

But it's the dead of winter, and Dream can't really be pissed at the Earth for simply orbiting the

sun. However, he *can* be pissed about still being here. It's five *thirty*, and they have yet to clock out. As expected, the graphics team didn't get their design in. Okay, fine, they expected that. They *planned* for that. They had a backup graphic, ready to go.

What they didn't plan for was Graphics missing its quarterly report.

Apparently, the reason why they'd been so behind lately was because their department manager had gone on an impromptu vacation three weeks ago and had yet to return. So now he and George were stuck here, filling out paperwork for a department they barely even fucking like, well past the time they were supposed to be off.

A groan sounds behind Dream. Dream glances up at his monitor, watches George in the reflection. He's hunched over his desk in a way that can't possibly be good for his back, hand gripping his pen tight. "My hand is cramping up," George complains, but he doesn't stop writing.

"How many more do you have?" Dream asks, attention switching back to his own paper. He's on his last page, his writing near illegible. It's all harsh scrawls and scribbled numbers, written with so much force that many of the words are ripped right through the page.

There's a moment of stillness, and then a loud exhale. Dream finishes writing his last percentage before he whips around, stack of completed paperwork in hand. "Finished," he says, just as George mutters, "Finally done."

Their eyes meet. Another second of silence passes. The faltering in his chest is almost enough to make him forget about his anger completely.

"You had less paperwork than me!"

Alright, moment over.

Dream rolls his eyes as he stands up, stretching his aching back. It cracks with an audible pop. "You literally divided it up yourself."

"I was trusting you to tell me if it was uneven!"

"Lie. You don't trust me with anything." Dream crosses the space between their desks, snatches the paperwork right out of George's hand. And George *lets* him, which goes to show how exhausted he really is. "I'll go drop these in Techno's office," he tells George, the closest to a goodbye George is going to get. And George knows it, too. He simply nods at Dream, waves three fingers in a farewell. Dream exits the room as George packs his bag, heading to Techno's office.

It's an easy task, dropping things off at your boss's office. Or it would be, if it wasn't thirty minutes past closing. Techno's gone home for the day and with it, the key to his office. Dream tries the door once, twice, and then resorts to painstakingly shoving papers one by one through the crack beneath the door. It takes him fifteen minutes to get everything through, and that's *with* more than half of the papers crumpling in the process.

By the time he gets back to his own office and packs his bag, he's bitter again, convinced that the graphics team is single-handedly responsible for all of the world's problems. He's angrily shoving his empty Tupperware back in his bag when a cough sounds, right by the exit.

George stands in the doorway, looking awkward and out of place. He's all bundled up in a coat and scarf, his hands stuffed in his pockets. "Is Techno still here?" he asks. He sounds different than normal. Nervous, somehow.

Dream shakes his head, wordless. “Why are you still here?” Dream finally asks, and it comes out harsher than intended.

If George notices the tone, he doesn’t say. Instead, he answers the question. “My battery, uh, died.”

Dream blinks once. Twice. And then, “That’s not possible.” George charges his phone obsessively, keeps it plugged in whenever he’s not using it. Dream has never seen it go below 93%.

George finally displays a reaction other than anxiety. His face scrunches up and his head tilts. “What?” George asks, finally looking like himself again. Dream is disgusted by the relief that floods his body, and he’s even more disgusted by his sudden noticing of George’s attire. Dream’s never seen him in a scarf before.

“Your phone literally can’t be dead—”

George’s expression suddenly changes, a mixture of surprise and amusement. “I’m not talking about my phone. It’s my car. My car’s battery is dead. I think I left my headlights on or something.”

“So why are you...” Dream gestures around the room with his hand.

Any amusement that was on George’s face is now gone, replaced by actual disappointment. Dream feels like he’s in grade school all over again. “Because I can’t get home, idiot. I need a jump.”

“Oh. Oh. Right. Duh.” Dream shifts his weight. His stomach feels tight, anticipating dread. “So do you want me to?” The words come out quiet – hesitant. Dream doesn’t know why he’s suddenly nervous about making an offer George literally can’t reject.

“Do I want you to what?”

Dream stares at him. “Jump your car.”

He watches the realization hit George, and then he watches the blush appear and spread. Firetruck red, instantly.

“Who’s the idiot now?” Dream asks, not waiting for a reply. He flicks off the lights as he sidesteps George, passing him on his way out the door. “Lock the office. I’ve got cables in my car.”

He makes it all the way to the elevator before he turns around. He jabs the ‘open door’ button a few times, and presses it another dozen times when he sees George walking towards him a minute later. George steps in beside him, silent as the elevator takes them down to the first floor.

When they step out of the building, Dream looks around. The parking lot is completely empty, save for two cars parked right beside each other. One is Dream’s black Honda Civic, and the other is the blue Subaru Outback he parks next to every day.

“That’s your car?”

“Yes?” George sounds oddly offended.

Dream lets out a laugh. “I should’ve known. It’s *blue*. ”

“What’s that got to do with anything?”

“Everything you own is blue,” Dream answers as he unlocks his trunk. He grabs the red and black jumper cables, heading for the hoods of their cars. The Outback’s is already popped.

George follows, speaking as he walks. “It’s my favorite color.”

“I figured.”

George shifts his weight from one foot to the other, impatient. The blush on his face has been replaced with a flush brought on by the biting cold. George looks different in the moonlight. Softer, maybe. “Well, it is the only color I can really see.”

The cables hit the pavement with a gentle thud. They both crouch to pick them up, nearly bumping into each other on the way down. Dream’s hands scramble for the cables, his fingers brushing against George’s more than once. “What do you mean it’s the only color you can see?” he asks, finally getting a solid hold on the cables. He looks up, right into rich brown eyes. Dream’s acutely aware of the way George’s eyes seem to get darker from the center outwards. He’s acutely aware of a lot of things now. George’s eyes, his proximity, his body heat. Everything feels different, even the damn air.

“I’m colorblind,” George says, like it’s obvious.

Dream blinks. The spell breaks. They both stand, hands clutching the same cables. “Really? I never knew.”

George laughs. “There’s a reason why Techno never has me do color palettes. I can’t see half the colors.”

“So what—” Dream pulls the cables apart, begins connecting them to the battery, “—colors can you see?”

George leans against the Outback, arms crossed over his chest. “Blues and yellows, mostly. And brown, but that doesn’t really count.” He shrugs absently, looking off somewhere else. Dream is grateful for it. He can’t focus when he’s got all of George’s attention on him like that, intense and all-consuming.

“No greens?”

George shakes his head. “No greens,” he confirms. “They mostly show up as yellow. Like your eyes. They’re yellow.”

Dream can’t stop the smile from spreading over his face. “You know the color of my eyes?”

That expression appears on George’s face again, the one chock full of disbelief and maybe a hint of amusement, too. “Dream, we *work* together. I look at you every day.”

Dream shoves his head beneath the hood of the Honda. “Well, I don’t know the color of *your* eyes.”

It’s a lie, and George knows it. Dream can hear him scoff and when he lifts his head, he sees the little puff of air still dissolving in the dark sky.

“Yeah, right,” George says, and Dream has no quick-witted rebuttal. So he digs out his keys and starts his own car, pretending not to hear what George said. Unfortunately, he still can’t escape him. George follows him to his car and leans against the door to the backseat. “So what now?”

“Now you start your car, and we see if I actually connected those cables correctly.”

He doesn’t have to see George to know he’s gaping, but he sticks his head out his door and checks

anyway. George's mouth is wide open and his eyes are all big, like a kid who's found coal beneath the tree on Christmas. "You don't know how to jump a car?"

"I have the cables, okay? And I've done it, like, once before, and—"

"*Dream.*"

"Just start the car!"

George looks like he wants to say more, but instead he shuts his mouth and stomps all the way over to his door. Dream shakes his head. *So fucking dramatic*, he thinks, and listens as George turns the key.

The engine sputters twice, but apparently, third times the charm, because George's car suddenly roars to life.

Dream removes his key and gets out of the car. "Told you I knew how to jump a car," he says with a self-satisfied smile. He starts disconnecting the cables, throwing them over his shoulder as he goes.

George comes to his side, fingers clasped around the edge of the Outback hood. "You didn't *know* how to jump it. You just got lucky," George grumbles, and it all sounds like white noise to Dream. Dream makes a talking motion with his hand, which is very middle school of him, but so is George refusing to give him any credit.

"Yeah, yeah. Say whatever you want. I still saved your ass," Dream says, slamming the hood of his car shut.

Then, the oddest thing happens.

George grabs Dream's forearm as he's walking back to the Civic's front door. He puts his whole hand on it, skin to skin. Dream's entire body stops. His heart fails, his lungs don't want to draw in air, and his feet freeze to the ground. He's gonna die here, frozen solid to this little piece of asphalt, right in the SB Inc. parking lot. And what's worse is, he's gonna *enjoy* it. Because George's hand is ice cold and silk-soft, and Dream doesn't know if he's ever felt something so lovely before. Or something so concerning.

"You're freezing," Dream says, because he can say nothing else. He's still standing there, staring at George's hand on his bare skin, like a brand.

George shifts his weight, retracts his hand. Dream's body starts thawing out, beginning with his heart.

"I know," George says, and he almost sounds embarrassed. Those pretty hands work on retying his scarf as he speaks. He does it in slow, fumbling movements, like he's using it more as a way to cope than for its actual purpose. George is quiet for a beat too long before he speaks again. "I just wanted to say thank you. For jumping my car."

If George asks, Dream will blame the pink of his cheeks on the frigid air. "Oh. It's, y'know—" Dream waves with his hand, like this is all so normal, so *casual*, like having George's hand on his skin is the most normal thing in the world, "—it's whatever. You don't have to thank me for it."

"Still. You didn't have to."

"I couldn't leave you stranded."

“You definitely could have.”

“I wouldn’t.”

The words feel amplified in the pitch of night. Dream would take them back if he could. He’d take them and shove them back down his throat, lock them into that cage right beneath his heart. They’re too much, too serious, too *real*.

But then George smiles. It’s big, and toothy, and there’s lines around the corners of his mouth from how wide he’s stretching his lips. Dream no longer has to worry about his frozen heart. It’s fully thawed now, and beating fast. A rapid thump in his chest, growing more worrying by the second.

“See you Monday, Dream,” George says. He walks back to his car, and Dream gets into his. He slides into the driver’s seat, reverses it, and drives all the way out of the parking lot. Dream makes it a mile and a half before he pulls over onto the side of the road, turns off his car, and screams into his steering wheel.

## wednesday

### Chapter Summary

the sb inc. assistants receive a lot of work, and dream takes george home.

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The weekend comes and goes, and Dream spends Monday and Tuesday in a haze, so by the time Wednesday rolls around, Dream has recovered from that late night with George.

Sort of.

His dreams have completely given up on his Andy Samberg fantasy. Instead, they go straight to the good stuff. Dream falls asleep each night, thinking very sleep-oriented thoughts. He thinks about how his pillow is nice and cold, and how his eyelids are heavy, and how refreshed he's going to feel when he wakes up the next morning. There's a lot of nothing after he falls asleep, a sort of void. And then it starts up, like a roll of developed film in his head.

George, eating off his plate. George, sipping his drink. George, smiling and laughing from across the table. It's all George, George, George, right until the film runs out and he wakes up.

He feels the same every time. Still tired, and heavy, and achingly empty, like he's missing something he's never had.

Dream tried guided meditations to get rid of the dreams. He tried not going on his phone fifteen minutes before bed, thirty, an *hour*. He tried drinking Sleepytime Tea, the one with that fucking bear on it. Nothing worked.

Coffee helps, though.

It's how he's gotten through Monday and Tuesday, though George would probably disagree. He'd practically been a zombie these past two days, still getting used to his reduced sleep schedule. He only managed to get any work done after chugging three mugs of luke-warm coffee, and even that didn't last long.

But it's Wednesday, and Dream's determined to make something out of the week.

That, and he has an untouched pile of papers on his desk that's an inch thick, all needed by Friday. They only have to be signed and dated, and they'll take him ten minutes at most, yet he still hasn't completed them. Every time he picks up his pen to write, the letters all swirl together and seem to change into a whole other language, like the enchantments used in *Bloodvines*. He always has to look away to keep from getting dizzy.

But again, it's Wednesday! And he's got his required fuel – a large iced coffee with four extra shots. Dream walks right into the office with a pep in his step and takes a seat in his chair. It's a bit too early to boot up either of the computers, so he starts to fuck with the pedals and the padding of his chair instead – anything to waste the time.

“You’re in a good mood.”

Dream nearly jumps out of his skin. He whips around, finds himself face to face with his boss. Techno moves like a fucking Tesla – Dream never even heard him come in.

“It was buy-a-shot, get-a-shot day at Java,” Dream says, and then sips his straw, as if to provide evidence.

Techno raises a brow only to drop it, likely because he realized he doesn’t care enough to ask. He sits in George’s chair in front of Dream, as if it’s the most normal thing in the world. He’s dressed in a thick red jacket with a white fur trim around the collar, dark pants, and intricately laced combat boots. He certainly is dressed for winter.

After a moment of silence, Dream finally asks, “So why are you...”

Techno twists the gold ring on his middle finger. “George is having car troubles. He told me he’d be late. Said he called you, but it went to voicemail.”

Dream’s face falls, and he has to turn to his desk to hide his disappointment. He sets his coffee down and jabs a button on his office phone.

*“My car is being terrible again. I think it might have something to do with the ignition this time. I’m not really sure. I’m gonna try and start it again, but if I’m late, you know why,”* George says through the speakers. There’s some shuffles on his end, a loud sigh, and then finally, *“Oh, shit. Is this still on? I’m—”* There’s a click, and then nothing at all. George sounds so close, even through the tinny speakers. Dream wants to turn around and see him, but when he turns, all he sees is Techno, looking at him boredly.

“Now you know. Later.” Techno leaves without waiting for a response.

Dream releases a breath he didn’t know he was holding, finally relaxing into his chair. Days without George are always the worst, partly because he has no one to annoy and partly because it’s *George* and if Dream doesn’t see him at least once a day, he gets cranky.

Or at least that’s what Sapnap claims.

In his defense, Sapnap says George gets cranky without him, too. That’s kind of what happens when you work exclusively with someone for months. You get used to seeing their face. You start looking forward to talking to them every day. Even if you hate each other, or annoy each other to bits, you still live in each other’s back pockets. You learn their likes and dislikes, their pet peeves and routines. George likes the color blue and hates anything he can’t touch. He can’t stand the sound of chewing and he always kicks the door shut with his right foot.

He does so now, even.

Dream looks up, surprised to see him. “I wasn’t expecting you so soon,” he says.

George sets down his backpack. “It worked after, like, the hundredth time,” he explains. He’s dressed in a red hoodie and dark wash jeans, loose and baggy. He looks *good*, and it’s not even Friday. Dream wonders what deity he must have pissed off to deserve such a punishment.

Dream looks away, fixes his attention on the pins of George’s backpack instead. He has over a dozen of them, and at least half of them are from SB Inc. games. He’s got Ranboo’s book on one pin, Bad’s corrupted cloak on another. He even has one of the masked villain from *Exile*.

It's only after George sits down that Dream realizes he's staring. He doesn't even get the chance to look away – George's eyes are on him within seconds, and they're so dark and devouring that Dream fears they're going to swallow him whole.

George takes his seat, and does this whole thing where he narrows his eyes, purses his pink mouth. Dream sets his iced coffee down, narrows his own eyes. George picks up his mouse. Dream does the same.

George's eyes light up. He always likes this – playing games with Dream. Or maybe he just likes the idea of beating Dream. Dream's worked beside him for months now and he still doesn't know which it is, but he likes beating George, and games are a fun distraction anyway.

The corners of George's mouth quirk up, like he's about to smile, and Dream has to force himself to look away. If he smiles, it's game over for Dream. Not just this game. *Every* game. Friday's smile was a stupid fluke, and it still ruined Dream. Dream cannot risk that happening again.

Dream breaks eye contact and turns his chair so that he's facing the monitor. He stares at the black screen, watching as George finally smiles and spins his chair, obviously pleased with winning the game.

*That's alright*, Dream thinks. Lose the battle, win the war. *I'll win the next game.*

But as he watches George spin and smile, he suspects he's already lost the next game, and the next, and the war entirely.

---

Two o'clock rolls around, and the office is achingly quiet.

Not like they're just not talking, or have momentarily taken a quiet break. No – the office is dead silent, save for the occasional breath and clacking of keys. Techno dumped a week's worth of work on them at the last minute, and he expects it to be finished by the end of the day. Dream's looking through game reports while George is doing... whatever it is George is doing.

It's something intense, by the look of it. He's been hunched over his keyboard since Dream came back from lunch, and his tea from this morning is untouched. Dream had brought him a new one around ten but that one went cold, too.

Dream looks at him, sees that he's in the zone, and goes back to noting down the end portal bugs in *Journey to the End*.

There's a loud sigh behind him, and when Dream turns around, he sees George with his elbows on the desk, face in his hands. Dream waits, but George never moves.

“George?” His voice comes out quiet and hesitant. In all their months in this office, Dream has never seen George like this. He's seen George happy, and mad, and downright evil, but he's never seen him so... deflated. It scares Dream more than he'd like to admit.

There's a beat of silence before George finally says, “What?” The words are muffled, near incomprehensible.

“What– What's wrong?” Dream puts one foot in front of the other, scoots his chair across the invisible barrier. He doesn't stop until he's right by George's side, staring at his monitor.

George lifts his head and gestures towards the screen. “It's–” he makes another vague gesture with his hands. George is flushed red all the way up to his ears, clearly frustrated. “This stupid fucking

code. It's not working." And then, a second later, "I can't figure out what's wrong with it." George's voice has gone quiet – embarrassed. George has been working on this for hours, failing at it for hours.

"Did you take your lunch today?" Dream asks, startling even himself. His voice is all wrong. It's soft, near doting. It's a tone he usually reserves for his siblings, or Patches, or Sapnap on *really* bad days. Not George. Never George.

George looks at him, and it's like he's realizing Dream is there for the first time.

George shakes his head, runs a hand through his hair. "No. I didn't have the time."

Dream drags George's mousepad towards himself, starts scrolling through the lines of text. "I can do it. You go get some lunch," he tells George. There's still a lot of code left to look over, and it'll be more work on Dream's already full plate, but the idea of keeping George here while he's frustrated makes Dream feel queasy and wrong. The workload doesn't even matter anymore – George needs a break, and Dream wants to help.

"Dream, I can't–"

"*Go.* Seriously," he says, and George is still looking at him, only now it's in that way of his. That soul-searching, secret-sucking way. "We need to finish this before the end of the day, anyway, and you're clearly in no shape to do it."

George knows Dream's only making excuses to mask his concern. Dream can see it in his eyes, written all across his face. But he doesn't *say* he knows, and that's what really matters. As long as he says nothing, Dream's feelings for George will remain unnoticed, or at the very least unsaid.

"Okay," George finally says. He's still looking at Dream, and his gaze burns hotter than any fire Dream's ever known. George gets up and stands in the doorway, hands in his hoodie pocket. "I'll be back in... fifteen?"

"Forty-five."

Dream isn't able to look away before he sees it. The tiny smile, gracing George's face. Dream has never seen it before, not even towards other people. Flames lick up Dream's torso, his throat.

He's fucked.

He's truly and utterly fucked.

"Forty-five," George repeats, and steps out the door.

Dream keeps staring at the door until George's footsteps fade to nothing. He turns to the monitor. The lines of code twist and swirl in his vision until his eyes go unfocused and he focuses more on his thoughts than his work.

George smiled at him. Again.

Dream's stupid fucking heart was sent into overdrive. *Again.*

Dream pinches the bridge of his nose, willing the thoughts away. He starts typing, but every letter typed is an uphill battle. All he can think of is George's stupid smile and that stupid fucking red hoodie and stupid fucking *George*.

It takes him twenty minutes to finish the project. He returns to his desk and organizes his desktop. He makes a playlist. He goes through his inbox. Anything to distract him from George.

It doesn't work.

None of it works.

He deletes random files on his computer. He thinks of George's cluttered desktop.

He compiles a playlist. He thinks of George's shitty taste in music.

He archives emails. He thinks of George's annoyingly formal messages.

It's painful, to want something you can't have. It's this constant pressure on his chest, pushing down, constricting his ribs until they crack. Until *he* cracks. Dream doesn't know how much longer he'll last under all this pain, this pressure. He's gonna break, and he's gonna do something stupid, and he's gonna ruin everything.

He wonders if it's worth it. If suffering for brief smiles and quiet laughs is worth it.

Forty-five minutes pass. George comes back right on time with a Java cup in one hand and a little paper bag in the other. He drops the sack on Dream's desk without saying a word.

Dream doesn't ask what it is. He doesn't even open it, not until George is settled in and typing away at his keyboard. Dream takes the bag in hand, peers down into it.

A heart-shaped sugar cookie sits in the bag, and Dream feels the realization wash over him like a bucket of freezing water.

It's worth it.

The pain; the suffering; the yearning. It's all worth it.

---

The rest of the day flies by.

George's break must have helped him, because he absolutely *demolished* the rest of his work, and then offered to help Dream. He *offered* to help *Dream*.

It caught Dream so off guard, he asked if he was speaking to George's doppelganger.

And George *laughed*, a beautiful, bright, airy laugh, and Dream was so starstruck that he didn't put up a fight. He split the workload, handed half to George, and completed the rest of the day's work hearing that laugh in his head, like the soundtrack to some shitty rom-com.

It's five o'clock now, and they're leaving on time.

Dream stands up and tugs on his coat, slips his phone into his pocket. He pulls out his keys and spins them around his fingers. George glares at him. The keys continue to click and clack together, louder and louder and faster and faster.

"Do you have to do that?" George asks, walking to the elevator.

Dream follows. "Do what?"

"You know what," George snaps.

Dream grins, wide and smug. There's nothing he enjoys more than getting a rise out of George. He stops spinning the keys, but keeps them in his hand.

George looks at him. For a moment, he looks shocked, and he's staring right at Dream's mouth. Then he looks at Dream's eyes, scoffs, and shakes his head.

The elevator opens. They step in. Dream has no idea what just happened.

The elevator stops at the fourth floor, letting other people in. They start streaming in in hordes, all desperate to be the first one out of the parking lot. Dream grits his teeth and steps closer to George. He feels George's fingers on his coat sleeve, keeping him close. His heartbeat triples. He can feel it in his ears, his throat, his fingertips.

As the elevator doors shut, Dream sees Sapnap, talking to Karl from the front desk. Karl looks real casual, and Sapnap kind of looks like a fan at a meet and greet. Dream turns to George. George turns to him. They exchange a look.

The time it takes to reach the ground floor feels incredibly long, made longer by the smell of sweat and exhaustion. Dream would've been fine standing in the elevator until it cleared out, but apparently George isn't. He fights his way through the crowd with his hand on Dream's sleeve, pulling him along. People grumble and glare, and he gives them all a look, like *What can you do?*

The second they get outside, Dream is gulping down fresh air.

"I couldn't be in there for another second," George says. His cheeks are already beginning to pink from the cold. "Do you know if Techno fired someone today? It fucking *reeked* of fear."

"Probably. They always act like chickens with their heads cut off whenever he makes a big cut," Dream replies, and George shudders, still traumatized from that packed elevator. He drops Dream's sleeve and digs out his keys, pressing the unlock button. The blue Subaru Outback, parked right beside the black Honda Civic, beeps twice.

They look at each other, and everything feels different. Something has changed, but Dream doesn't know what.

"See you tomorrow," Dream says, his hand on his door.

"See you tomorrow," George echoes, and they both get in their cars.

Dream sits in the driver's seat and plugs his phone into the aux. The music is only just starting when he hears George's car begin to sputter, like a dying man's last cough. He looks over, watches as George turns his key and fails, over and over. He does it a dozen more times, but the car never starts. His head falls to the top of his steering wheel.

Dream rolls down his window and throws a penny at George's. It pings off the glass and falls to the asphalt between them. George looks at him, and the frustration on his face makes Dream's chest go tight in all the wrong places. Dream makes a rolling motion, and George just throws his hands up.

Right. He can't roll his windows down if his car is off.

Dream exits his car and walks over to George's door. George already has it open. He's slumped in his seat, looking defeated. His eyes are low as he looks at Dream.

"What?" George asks, and it lacks the fire it should have.

“What’s up with your car?” Dream asks, which is dumb, because he *knows* what’s wrong with George’s car. Ignition troubles, just like what happened this morning. But he can’t focus when George is in front of him and looking so vulnerable. It feels wrong, to focus on anything other than George at a time when he clearly needs some support.

“The ignition. I think it’s done for good,” George says, running a hand through his hair. “I’ll just call an Uber or something. No point in trying when I know it’s not gonna work.”

Dream can’t keep the words in. He tries to bite his tongue, tries to keep it trapped, but the offer comes out anyway. “I can give you a ride.” The words are spoken with a gentle kindness that makes Dream want to crawl into a hole and disappear. Who *is* he? What happened to the Dream that wanted nothing to do with George? Dream misses that version of himself. At least he was in control. At least he knew what he was doing. Right now, he has no idea where his head is.

George looks up at him, properly this time, and looks a bit shocked. His mouth is slightly agape and his eyebrows are raised. “What?

Dream shrugs, trying to play it off as cool and casual. He’s not sure it works. “No need to waste money on Uber when I’m right here. Where do you live?”

“102nd and Savannah.”

“It’s on my way.”

George swings his legs out the door. His feet are slotted between Dream’s: Nike-Vans-Nike-Vans. He gets up before he stops, right in front of Dream. They’re so close. Dream can feel the body heat radiating off of him.

“Are you serious?” George asks, and the reluctance gives him a chance to think.

“*Yes.* Now come on, I don’t have all night,” Dream says. He turns and walks away without looking back. Dream gets into his car, and Mitski’s voice flows all around him. A second later, George gets in beside him. He’s looking around the car curiously and his hands are hovering in the air, like he’s afraid to touch anything. “What, have you never been in a car before?”

“No, no. It’s just... It’s cleaner than I expected.”

There’s silence. Then, “I hate you.”

“No you don’t.” There’s a smile on George’s face, shining through his words clear as day. Dream can’t let himself look at it, so he pulls out of his spot instead. He starts to drive as George settles in.

The drive to George’s apartment is nice, to say the least. They talk. A little bit about *Journey to the End*, a little bit about the new drinks at Java, and a *lot* about Sapnap and Karl. Halfway through the ride, George takes aux and plays music. The songs are all soft instruments paired with clear vocals, and they make Dream feel like he’s floating.

When they arrive at 102nd and Savannah, Dream turns off the car, but George stays where he is. He can feel George staring at him. He just doesn’t know where.

“Florida Gators? I didn’t know you liked football,” George murmurs.

It takes Dream a moment to realize what he’s talking about but when he does, he snorts. George must be looking at the Gator keychain, hanging off the ignition.

"There's a lot of things you don't know about me."

"That's not true," George says. "I know what's important."

"Like what?"

"Your favorite cookie," he starts. Dream shrugs, giving him the point. George continues. "Your cat's name. Your favorite video games. Your terrible sleep schedule."

Dream opens his mouth, the words on the tip of his tongue. *'Cause of you!* he wants to say – to shout. But that's something about him that not even Dream can admit to himself.

"Those are all surface-level facts. Give me something real."

Dream looks over for one brief second. He allows himself one little glance because he thinks he can handle it, but he can't.

George has got his eyes narrowed in challenge, and there's this tiny little smirk on his face. It's barely anything at all, but Dream's fingers still start drumming on the wheel.

"Okay," George accepts. "You complain about your job, but there's nowhere you'd rather be. You love working on video games. You love coding, and thinking, and being challenged. You love being recognized for your work, and you love compliments. You love to help, and you love your friends."

The words hang in the air.

And then, calm and level, George says, "I wish we could be friends."

He looks at George, and he *wants*. An incessant need burns beneath his skin, builds up hotter and hotter every second. It's grown from that very first day they met, from a tiny spark to an inferno, white-hot. No matter how many times Dream tries to suffocate it, it just comes back, stronger and hotter and slowly burning him alive. It'll kill him if he lets it, and he can't let it.

"We're not friends," he says. The words taste like acid in his mouth. "We can never be friends."

George's face crumbles. It's terrifying, and it's worrying, and it hurts so fucking bad to know that he's the cause. But then George's face changes. It goes red – angry. It's not a mask, and it's not the anger he's used to receiving from George. No – this anger is serious and as severe as that fire burning Dream up from the inside out.

"Shut up," George says, lightning fast.

Dream should stop. He should stop, and he should apologize, and he should return them to how they once were. But he can't. He can't stop when he knows that one day, that fire is going to get him. He's going to fail at hiding his feelings for George. That fire inside of him will grow until it burns him and all of his surroundings – George included.

"Shut up? Why should I shut up? We *can't* be friends. Not in this life!"

George's mouth is on his. Hot and heavy and *angry*, so angry it's palpable. He's got Dream's shirt bunched in his fist, right at the collar. It's not even choking him, yet Dream still cannot breathe. His lips move against George's on their own accord, hungry and wanting, his pulse a worrying pound in his ears.

When George pulls away a second later, his lips are wine-red, and Dream cannot stop staring at them. He looks at them, and he can still feel them against his own mouth, pressing in, drawing out. Exposing all of his deepest desires, and then some. He wants more. But George, apparently, doesn't.

"Just shut up," George says, but it sounds like the fight has left him. His face is conflicted, split between anger and shock. Dream wants to reach out, wants to fix everything once and for all, but he can't get the words out. He can't move his arms and trust that they won't grab George by the jaw to kiss him again. So he sits there, helpless, as George looks Dream in the eyes for one excruciating moment and gets out of the car, slamming it as he goes.

#### Chapter End Notes

... anyway comments and kudos are greatly appreciated <3

## thursday

### Chapter Summary

dream works in an empty office, and sapnap gives relationship advice.

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The morning after the kiss leaves him with what feels like a hangover.

Dream wakes up to the sun in his eyes and anxiety sitting heavy on his chest. It feels real and solid, rising and falling with his every breath.

He cracks open an eye.

Patches sits on his chest, staring at him like she's considering eating him and licking his bones clean. His alarm blares beside him, filling his head with iPhone's Radar. She swats at him with her paw before turning around, digging her nails into him as she walks to the edge of the bed. Dream turns onto his side and turns off the alarm, eyeing his phone with bleary eyes. It's seven in the morning, and his head is still throbbing from his racing thoughts from the night before. There's no way he can work like this, especially not with George right there, looking like both his greatest temptation and his worst punishment. Dream's just not ready to see him yet.

He misclicks three times before he finally finds Techno's contact. He raises the phone to his head, eyes falling shut.

Three rings later, Techno is in his ear. "What?" he barks out, and Dream winces. He's too damn loud.

"I can't come into work today. I'm—" Dream fakes a cough with closed eyes, half asleep already, "—sick. Sorry."

"Well bring a damn bucket. George called out, so I need you here."

That wakes him right up. Dream sits up so fast he goes dizzy, eyes wide. Patches meows impatiently at the foot of the bed. "He *what?*?"

"He called out, so you have to work. Pick me up an americano on your way in."

The call ends with a click and Dream is left sitting there, staring at his phone.

George has never called in before.

He's only been here for six months. He's still in the honeymoon phase of the job, where he's in love with the coding and the work and the allure of SB Inc. Yeah, he gets frustrated, but for the most part, he's still drinking the SB Inc. Kool-Aid. There's no reason for him to call out. Except for... Dream, and last night, and that fucking kiss.

Dream collapses back into his bed, stares up at his popcorn ceiling.

Was it even a kiss? Can something fueled by anger and hate even be called a kiss? Dream doesn't know why George kissed him, but he knows it wasn't out of the kindness of his heart. He was mad. So fucking mad. Dream could taste it on his lips, could feel it coursing off him in waves.

If Dream's desire for George is fire, then George's hate for him is water. It's a tsunami. When it hits Dream, it leaves nothing untouched. It soaks him to the core and fills his lungs to the brim until he can do nothing but lay there and think about how bad he's fucked up, how much he's ruined everything.

Dream replays the night in his head, over and over, like a broken record. He remembers George in his car, and the feeling of his gaze, and the look of his smirk before he showed Dream exactly how well he knew him.

He remembers George's confession, and his composure, and the way his face crumbled when Dream told him it was impossible.

Dream was telling the truth last night. They can never be friends. They can either be more, or they can be enemies. Dream cannot be friends with George without wanting to be *more*. He never could. He's been starstruck by George ever since he was gifted that smile that first day, and he's been trying desperately to hide his feelings ever since he *stopped* receiving that smile.

Dream releases a breath.

Maybe George is calling out for something else, something other than the kiss. Maybe he needs to run errands for his roommate, or help a friend move. Maybe the reason has nothing to do with Dream at all.

Dream gets out of bed. He brushes his teeth. He gives Patches her food. He tries to convince himself George's absence is because of something else, something totally unrelated to him.

It doesn't work.

---

Dream walks into the office thirty minutes late. There is no blue Subaru parked beside him in the parking lot, and no one greets him in his office.

He works in silence for an hour. Two. The time passes in the blink of an eye, but every time he pauses to check on George, the seconds between him looking at George's empty desk and turning back towards his own monitor feel excruciatingly long. Dream feels George *everywhere*. He lingers around every corner and in every drawer and all the spaces between. Dream goes through the motions like he's on autopilot, and his mind is in another place entirely. No matter what Dream does, he can't get George out of his mind.

George haunts the office, and he haunts Dream.

He always has. Ever since he took this job, he's been haunting Dream. Dream doesn't know how he used to work before George came along. How had he ever gotten through the day without George's snarky comments, or his annoyingly loud typing? How had he survived without stealing bits and pieces of George's smile and patience?

Dream fucked up – he knows this. He went too far. He pushed George until he broke and snapped and crumbled into dust, right in his passenger seat. The kiss must have been a panic response, a way to throw Dream off before he could do any more damage.

Dream inhales. The silence stings his lungs and hurts more than ever before.

When Sapnap bursts into his office an hour after lunch, he's grateful for the noise.

Dream attempts a smile. "Sapn—"

"What did you do to George?"

The smile drops. Dream spins in his chair. "Don't you have a job to do?"

Sapnap ignores him. "He was supposed to help me film a 'day in the life' for the Twitter account! Now I have nothing to post."

"I didn't do anything."

"You totally did."

"No, I didn't, and Techno's gonna come up here soon."

Sapnap snorts. "Oh yeah, and what's he gonna do? Fire me?"

"Maybe."

"He'll have to pry the passwords out of my cold, dead hands. No one's posting on those socials but me."

Uninvited and unwelcome, Sapnap takes a seat. He's in George's seat, hands gripping the armrests. It hurts to look at the chair, so Dream fixes his attention on a coffee stain on the carpet instead.

"So did you need anything?" Dream prompts.

"I need you to tell me what you did to George."

Dream grits his teeth. Sapnap just doesn't give up, does he?

"I didn't do anything," he repeats, his voice tight. Sapnap was a nice reminder that there's life outside of this office, but now that Dream knows, he needs Sapnap to go. He opens his mouth to speak, but Sapnap starts blabbing instead.

"He's not even answering his phone. You broke George," Sapnap argues. "Seriously, Dream, what the hell did you do? He's never been like this before."

Dream sighs. "I told him we couldn't be friends, and he kissed me."

Sapnap blinks three times before he finally speaks. "He *what*? Start over. From the beginning."

The levee breaks. Rushing words fall from his lips, fast and bumpy. Each word runs into the next, and Dream's not even sure he's making sense. He can't think long enough to work out grammar and proper sentences. These words – they're devastating. They're clawing up the inside of him, forcing their way out, regardless of what he really wants.

The story fights its way out in fragments. Dream talks about meeting George, and his fucking outfit, and that fucking smile that broke Dream from the inside out.

Then he brings up George's emails, and his release notes, and the way he forces Dream to watch every single update teaser when it comes out as if they hadn't spent the last week and a half editing it. Somewhere in his ramble, he touches on George's obsession with his battery, and his shitty music, and his too-clean shoes.

When he gets to last night, he recounts it in a painful amount of detail, and ends up stammering through half his words. And the worst part is, Sapnap just sits there, taking it all in, not saying a word. Dream's never seen him so quiet, which only makes him more nervous.

At the end of it all, Sapnap is staring at him. “So you told him you couldn’t be friends, even though you’re in love with him?”

*You’re in love with him.*

Dream’s never heard those words spoken out loud before. He hasn’t even allowed himself to think them. Acknowledging something only makes it real, and the last thing he’s ever wanted is for his feelings for George to be real. But hearing those words now, hearing his best friend say *you’re in love with him...* They don’t feel right, but they don’t feel wrong, either.

*Is Dream in love with him?*

Has he loved him this whole time?

Dream doesn’t know why he bothers – yes. The answer is, undoubtedly, yes.

“I... did tell him that.”

Sapnap groans, and it echoes throughout the room. “*Why* would you say that? You’re so whipped for him it *hurts*, yet you won’t even become his friend?”

“I can’t be his friend. Not without...”

Sapnap finishes his words, “Not without wanting to date him? Who fucking cares? Even if he didn’t feel the same, at least you’ve still got him. Now you’ve just got this giant mess between you two.”

Dream is silent. And then, quiet, he asks, “How do you know he feels the same?”

“What?”

“You said *didn’t*.”

Sapnap looks at him and at first, Dream just thinks it’s disbelief, like he can’t believe how fucking stupid Dream is. And maybe it is in disbelief, but there’s also some pity mixed in, like Sapnap genuinely feels bad for him. The expression makes Dream’s skin crawl.

“It’s so obvious. He— he looks at you, Dream, and it’s like you’re the sun or something. Whenever you walk into the room, he gravitates right towards you. And, don’t ever tell him I told you this,” Sapnap glares at him, real serious, “but he *talks*. He talks my fucking ear off during CS:GO. Even when we’re not talking about you, it’s *somehow* about you. But you do the same thing, so I can’t even get mad at him for it.”

Dream’s mouth goes dry. He *knows* he talks about George – that part doesn’t matter. But *George* talks about *him*?

“He talks about me,” he repeats, awestruck. He leans forward in his chair, shaking fingers pressed flat to his armrest. “What— what does he say?”

Sapnap’s eyes narrow, and Dream knows he’s asked for too much. Sapnap shakes his head, clicks his tongue. “Doesn’t matter what he says. Just trust me – he likes you.”

“Talking about me doesn’t prove anything.”

“Oh my god, you fucking idiot. He *kissed* you. You don’t kiss someone you don’t like.”

“It didn’t mean anything. He was mad. He wanted me to shut up, and that was the only way to do it.”

Sapnap shakes his head. “That is not the *only* way to do it, and you fucking know it. I don’t know why he kissed you, but it wasn’t nothing. You need to talk to him. Figure this shit out before I figure it out for you. I can’t have you two fighting. We’ve got that League tournament on Sunday.”

Leave it to Sapnap to find some way to benefit from all of this.

“I’ll *try*. No promises.”

“*Yes* promises. I need my mage and my assassin. And I also need my best friends talking to each other again. Do you know how fucking boring meetings are gonna be without you two bickering all the time? I’ll have to actually listen and—”

Dream’s phone rings. He picks it up. After some well placed *okay*’s and *mmhmm*’s, he hangs up.

“Front desk wants you.”

Sapnap narrows his eyes before he relaxes in the chair. He takes it for a slow spin. “You can’t get rid of me that easily, Dream.”

“It was Karl, if that matters.”

Sapnap suddenly freezes. And then, without even saying goodbye, he shoots up and bolts out of the room, leaving Dream with nothing but silence and his thoughts.

## Chapter End Notes

hehe if you enjoyed, please consider leaving a comment or a kudos. i really love reading y'all's thoughts on the chapter c:

## friday

### Chapter Summary

dream talks to george.

### Chapter Notes

part of the journey is the end... nah i'm just playing, but here's the last chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Friday comes, and Dream remembers his promise.

He pulls on freshly-ironed clothes and tries to comb his hair into something decent-looking. It takes him a half hour to find a tie, and he almost gives up on it altogether. He ends up digging out a long-forgotten black one at the last minute. The last time he wore it was probably high school, and he has to watch a video on how to tie it. He stares at himself as he does it, hands crossing over one another. In the mirror, he looks like himself, dialed up to eleven.

His shirt is black, the same shade as his pants. The last time he wore it was *definitely* high school and he's gotten broader since, so it's tighter around the shoulders than it should be, but Dream thinks it looks alright. The blazer was always a little too big, and now it fits like a glove.

Dream finishes tying the tie, and all he can think of is George's three-piece suit, the one he'd worn on his first day. It was gray and crisp and had a complicated looking knot around the collar. It would probably take Dream years to learn how to do that. It probably took George seconds.

Dream slides rings onto his fingers and tries to think of anything other than George, but his brain is relentless. He finally gives in on his drive to work, allowing himself to wonder what George is wearing today.

He doesn't know why he tortures himself like this. He doesn't even know if George is coming, much less what he's wearing. He's only getting his hopes up and causing himself unnecessary anxiety. He shouldn't be thinking about George. It only makes him think more, makes him imagine scenarios where George hates him and curses him and storms out of the room.

Dream doesn't know if he could handle that. George, leaving for good. He would take the broken mess that they are now over total and complete absence.

Terrifying daydreams aside, Dream knows what he's doing.

He's gonna walk in there, and he's gonna talk to George, like him and Sapnap discussed.

If George is even there.

If he's still even working at SB Inc.

Dream stays in his parking spot well after he's pulled in, trying to shake the bad thoughts. The spot beside him is still empty, which worries him, but it's early. George always comes in right on time, never before. And besides, he could be getting an Uber. Or a cab.

Dream pulls down his sun visor, stares at himself in the little mirror. He runs a hand through his hair, then another, and another, until it looks brushed back and intentional. He looks around his car for another distraction. He finds nothing, so he goes inside, sticks his foot into a closing elevator. The doors part for him.

George stands in the elevator.

Dream tries to keep his eyes on George's face as best he can, but his willpower can only last so long. He's got his eyes on George's outfit within the minute, studying it, memorizing it until it's as familiar to him as his own birthday. George's shirt is olive green, and he's got a khaki-colored peacoat over it. His pants are light and held up by a brown belt. He looks so good, and Dream doesn't want to look away.

"Are you coming in?" George asks.

Dream lowers his gaze and steps inside. "You're early today," he says, hand tucked in his pocket. Out of the corner of his eye, Dream sees George do the same.

"The Lyft drove faster than expected," George says, and taps his foot once. The game ends.

The ride up to the fifth floor is achingly silent. Silence with George has never bothered him, not ever. It was always comfortable, and familiar, and easy to break. There is nothing easy about this tense quiet, and there is definitely not anything familiar.

The second the doors open, George is walking out. He doesn't look back, and he doesn't wait for Dream. Dream shouldn't have expected him to, but the move still knocks the breath out of him, sends a shiver across his chest.

Dream follows George to the office, wordless.

He takes a seat at his desk. He does not go on his phone or mess with his chair. He does not pester George or throw something at him. He simply starts up his computer, logs in, and checks his email.

He wonders if this is how normal coworkers act.

If they were normal coworkers, maybe they wouldn't talk as much. Maybe the office would be calm, and quiet, and simple. Maybe they'd give each other shitty birthday gifts and exchange Christmas cards.

Dream has never wanted anything less.

There's a difference between normal coworkers and George and him. Dream knows that now.

Normal coworkers don't bicker and fight. They don't curse and swear. They certainly don't break their coworker's heart and get kissed right after.

The silence makes him feel cleared out and empty. He clears his throat, taps his pen. Again, and again, and again. George never tells him to stop. George never tells him anything at all.

Between one tap and another, Dream turns. "George, I—"

“We don’t need to talk about it.”

His breath catches in his throat. He turns fully, facing George. He stares at the back of his head, sees that familiar swirling cowlick, right along his crown. “I want to.”

“You *want* to, Dream?” George spins around, quick, and Dream suddenly misses the back of his head. This is not the George he knows, not at all. This George is pale-faced and set-browed and so fucking mad that Dream can feel the anger like a physical blow. He feels his shoulders tense and his throat tighten and his skin shrink a size too small. “What about what I want?” George asks, and there’s so much heat in his voice, so much hate. Dream doesn’t think he’s ever heard it before now.

“Please, just let me ex—”

The door opens with a thud.

“Emergency meeting,” Techno says, and he’s got this crazed look in his eyes, the one he always gets when he’s feeling, well, anything. “Fourth floor. Now.” Techno runs off, clutching a posterboard and an assortment of Sharpies.

George gets up immediately and Dream walks after him, trying to catch up, but George is just too fast. He slides into the elevator with Techno, effectively killing any chance Dream has to talk to him. Dream stands in the corner of the elevator, fist clenched, throat tight.

He’s the last one to leave the elevator, trailing Techno and George from a distance. They’re talking now, and even when George is talking to Techno, he sounds short, like he’s seconds away from exploding.

The three of them step into the full conference room. Dream walks to Sapnap, and George walks to the opposite side of the room. What is he doing? His seat is over here, with Dream and Sapnap. Dream can’t remember the last time they sat apart during a meeting. In fact, he doesn’t think they ever have. They’ve been connected at the hip from the moment they met, whether they wanted it or not.

Dream stays standing for too long. Sapnap tugs him down into his chair.

“What did you do? That does not look like fixing it, Dream!” Sapnap hisses.

“He won’t talk to me,” he breathes out. He’s still looking at George, and George seems to be looking anywhere but him. A pit forms in his stomach, and not the good kind. It’s like a black hole in his body, sucking out all the good and leaving only the bad. “Sapnap, I—”

“You fucked up,” Sapnap finishes. “I know this. You know this. We *both* know this. What happened? Why isn’t he talking to you? Is he mad, or is he in a bad mood, or did he lose his fucking voice?”

“I don’t know,” he whispers. He can’t think. His thoughts are all over the place and his brain feels scrambled and he’s—*Lost*, he realizes. He’s lost. “I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?” Sapnap asks, and his voice is quieter this time, even more so than it was before. It’s not a hiss or a frustrated ramble. It’s kind, and caring, and Dream can’t remember the last time Sapnap spoke to him like this. It must’ve been when they were teenagers, after Dream failed his Physics test. Sapnap stayed up all night with him on the phone, looking up formulas and different ways to cheat.

“He won’t even look at me. He’s so mad. I’ve never seen him like this. He’s never been *this* mad. Not even when...” The words die in his mouth. *Not even when you put thumbtacks in his chair*, he wants to say. *Not even when we made him lose all of his mana in League*. Those things sound so insignificant now, so small. They don’t compare to what he did to George. Nothing does.

Sapnap’s hand comes down on his shoulder. He squeezes, and Dream feels seventeen again, stressed and scared with only Sapnap to comfort him. “You’ll talk to him, Dream. You’ll fix this,” Sapnap says, and he sounds so sure of it that it actually calms Dream. Or maybe he just overloaded his head and now he’s dying from it. Either way, Dream calms, and he finally starts to take notes on what Techno is saying.

Techno is talking, fast and wordy, about his ideas for merchandise. Apparently, *Kingdom Hearts* is kicking their ass right now, so they need to do more, and Techno thinks merch is the way to do that. He’s got it all written out on that posterboard of his, color-coded and neat, despite his franticness.

“Any ideas? I will literally take anything,” Techno says. He throws a Sharpie into the crowd. Sam from Tech Support catches it, and Techno zeroes in on him like a predator to prey. “You. What do you have for me?”

Sam blanches. “Shirts,” he blurts out. “T-shirts. Crewnecks. Hoodies.”

“Physical branding,” Techno deduces. “I like that.”

Across the room, George raises his hand. Techno only nods his way.

“We can have half black, half white shirts. We can do hoodies with the *Exile* mask embroidered on them. Ranboo still talks to him in *Journey to the End*,” George says, and Dream can’t even feel the pauses in his pulse. It’s just a constant motion in his chest, a crushing pressure. George looks at him. His jaw is tight, and his eyes look different than before. It dawns on Dream all at once.

George isn’t mad. He’s hurt, and somehow that’s worse.

Dream can deal with anger. He *knows* anger. He knows how it feels and how it settles, how it seeps into and corrupts your mind. He can reverse anger. He doesn’t think he can do the same with hurt, but he’ll be damned if he doesn’t try.

“Tie in all the games. I can work with that,” Techno says, and he’s still nodding like a madman, but Dream’s only half aware of that. He’s focused more on this sinking feeling in his chest, this sudden realization.

He *hurt* George. He knew his words were terrible, but George has never once faltered from anything Dream has done. They bicker, and they argue, and they fight, but they do it together, and they have *fun* while doing it.

Dream doesn’t know how he ever thought they were enemies. This whole time, they’ve been growing closer, in their own special way. Dream knows George’s favorite *everything*, and George can name everyone in Dream’s family.

They’re not enemies. They never have been.

Which means Dream just hurt his friend.

“Meeting dismissed. Adjourned. Whatever. Just get out of my sight so I can think.” Techno waves them all out of the room with his hand. Dream waits in his seat, and then follows George out the

door. He's right on his heels this time, even as they enter the elevator.

The doors of the elevators slide shut. They're alone, yet it still doesn't feel safe to speak freely. He waits until they're in their office, until they're behind a closed door and are settled in their seats.

He's still staring at his monitor when he starts speaking, eyes fixated on a scratch in the bottom left corner. "I'm sorry," he starts, because he doesn't know where else to begin. "I didn't mean it. Any of it. I didn't mean to say we aren't friends, that we couldn't be. We were. We are. You.... you..." He can't get the words out. He doesn't even know where to start.

How can he begin to tell George what he feels for him? How can he tell George that he thinks of him when he falls asleep, and when makes breakfast, and when he feeds his damn cat? That he invades and takes over everything Dream is, and Dream can't even care about it because he's too damn into George?

Where does he even start?

There's silence. Then, in a quiet voice, George says, "At least look at me while you're talking."

Dream listens. Of course he fucking listens.

He turns towards George, meets his eyes. Dream doesn't remember them being so dark, or so honest. George is usually the private one between them, the one that bites his tongue and holds back his punches, but that doesn't seem to be the case anymore. Dream feels like he can see everything in his eyes. The hurt, the anger, the embarrassment. George is an open book, and all Dream has to do is reach out and read him.

"You hate me," he finally says.

"I don't hate you," George whispers, and he's got that look on his face. Dream feels cracked in two, split open. Like George can see everything inside of him. The good. The bad. The spirit-crushing, heartbreaking terrible.

"You should. I was stupid, and mean, and I never should have said what I did. But you still kissed me and I don't... I don't understand why," Dream says. He doesn't know how to do this – doesn't know how to bear his feelings. He's so used to hiding behind his words and his fake confidence. To let all of that fall away feels terrifying, but so does the thought of not having any relationship with George. Dream'll settle for friends at this point. Hell, he'll settle for mere acquaintances. Just as long as it's with George. "Did you know, somehow? Did you know how I felt about you?"

George's dark brows furrow. "How you felt?"

"How I feel."

George's throat constricts as he swallows.

Dream absolutely stares.

"I didn't know. I don't. You were talking and I just—" George's eyes drop, like he's ashamed. "I couldn't hear anymore, and I figured that if we weren't gonna be friends anyway then I may as well kiss you, just to say I'd fucking done it. Just to say I tried."

"You weren't mad at me?"

"I was pissed," George says quickly, and the heat inside of Dream crackles. "But that wasn't why

I kissed you. I did it because I was scared, and I didn't want to lose you without at least trying.”

George kissed him because he was scared. Not because he hated Dream, or because he wanted to shock him. He kissed him because he was scared, and because he didn't want to lose Dream, and because George likes him, too.

George likes him.

Sapnap told him that George did, but to actually hear it coming from George is something else entirely. It doesn't make sense to Dream. He doesn't understand how someone like George could ever want anything to do with him.

Dream is cocky, and he's impulsive, and he's arrogant. He's not boyfriend material. He's barely even friend material. Sapnap and him only worked because they were two heads of the same snake, and even then, it took years for them to really get comfortable with each other. He hasn't had years with George. He hasn't had a chance to show George that he can be kind, and caring, or at least plain *decent*. George has only ever seen the worst parts of him, and George likes him anyway.

George likes him despite all the bad and ugly. He may even like him more because of it.

“I was scared, too,” Dream admits softly, chest warm. He can feel George looking at him, studying him like he's code on a screen. “I've liked you since I've known you. You were annoying, and grumpy, and you always used all the sugar in the break room, but I still liked you, and I didn't want us to change. We'd gotten to a place where we could interact and talk and be near each other and I thought that if we went further, I wouldn't be able to be your friend or even your enemy, not the way I should be.” It feels silly, to admit all of these fears and worries, especially now that he knows George feels the same.

“You didn't know that I liked you?”

“Never.”

A laugh leaves George's lips, short and wonder-filled. The tension in the room cracks into rose-colored pieces. “I thought I made it so obvious.”

“And I thought you seriously hated me.”

George looks at him, and the corners of his eyes are creasing now. This time, Dream isn't afraid to see him smile.

“Why would you think that? I bought you cookies. I dressed up for you.”

“You never smiled at me, and I assumed you just dressed like that outside of work. And you gave me a cookie, like, once, so don't even try and paint yourself as generous right now.”

“Of course I never smiled! You freaked me out!”

Now it's Dream's turn to be surprised. He leans forward in his seat, even scoots his chair forward a little. His knees hit George's. Nike-Vans-Nike-Vans.

“How did I freak you out?” George has literally appeared in his dreams. It doesn't get much freakier than that.

“That first day—“ George's cheeks go red and embarrassed, but he still smiles despite it. “You looked at me, and you had those serial killer eyes on. You stared me down and then you just

looked away. Fucking scared me. At first, I was upset, because we were supposed to be partners and all, then I got my head straight and I realized how much of a massive dick you were and I decided I didn't want you as a friend anyway."

Dream snorts. "Serial killer eyes," he mocks, accent and all.

"What's with those, anyway? You stared at me, like, all the time."

"Maybe it's better if you just find out."

"If I find out? How—"

Dream kisses George, and now it's his turn to be hot and heavy, aching and solid. There's no anger this time, no simmering rage. There is only Dream and George, in this office, pressed close like they were made for this. Dream grabs George's jaw. He feels a tug at his throat, and he knows George has his tie, the one he almost gave up on finding. He's *so* glad he didn't.

Kissing George – *really* kissing George – doesn't feel like fire. It feels like air. It feels like Dream has only ever been navigating life at half-capacity, half everything, and now that he's kissed George, he feels complete. He feels like he can reach up and steal the stars from the sky. The moon. The sun.

But why would he? He has everything he wants right here, sitting in front of him; in his hands, against his mouth.

George parts with a shuddering breath. His lips are red and puffy, and Dream brushes his thumb over them. George bites the tip of it, the damn tease.

"I still can't believe you called me annoying during your love confession."

The memory brings heat to Dream's cheeks. "Shut up."

"You really think I'm annoying and grumpy?"

"Yes. Always," he answers automatically. George smiles against his thumb. "Hey, so I was thinking..."

"What, you gonna report me to HR for biting you?"

Dream rolls his eyes. "I was actually wanting to invite you over for dinner, but if you wanna be like that..."

George's eyes go wide. His fingers tighten on Dream's tie like it's the only thing keeping him rooted to the ground. "No, no. I don't wanna be like that. Your house. Please. Make me dinner and let me eat all your sugar."

He acts like he's thinking about it, then draws George in for another kiss. "Fine. Seven o'clock?"

"Sure, but you have to give me a ride. No car, remember?"

"Mm, I don't think so. Guess you'll have to start walking now if you wanna make it in time."

George releases Dream's tie, and Dream misses the synch of it around his throat. "I guess I will," he says. He doesn't move an inch. He looks at Dream, up and down, all-consuming. Dream basks in the attention with a smile. "You look good, by the way. Seriously."

Dream clicks his tongue. “Better watch out, Georgie. I think that counts as harassment.”

“So it does,” George says, and keeps looking at Dream. “We are gonna have to tell HR about this at some point. You know that, right?”

“I know. I was just gonna force you to do it.”

“And face Techno alone? No way.”

“George, everyone knows he likes you more.”

“And I love you. Doesn’t that count for something?”

There’s a pause, a brief moment of silence as Dream gapes and George desperately tries to backtrack.

“Fine,” Dream finally says, and the glee on George’s face makes talking to HR all worth it.

---

At exactly 7:18 pm, Dream and George are bustling around the kitchen, knocking hips and bumping shoulders. Dream chops a carrot as George stretches to reach the top shelf.

“Why do you keep everything so fucking high? It’s obnoxious,” George grumbles.

Dream pops a carrot piece in his mouth, and continues to cut. “So grumpy,” he muses.

George’s feet go flat. He turns towards Dream, glaring. “Would it kill you to help me?”

“I mean, I could, but I don’t particularly want to.”

Some things never change.

## Chapter End Notes

i really hope you guys enjoyed this fic! i had a ton of fun writing it and i loved all the support <33 thank you so much for reading it y'all are the best. mwah.

[twitter](#)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!